1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

XXI

The "Ark of Ishmael"

TO THE BEDOUINS of Arabia, the *Markab* has a significance such as the Palladium had to the Trojans. They all hold the belief that the possession of this symbol, much like the Israelitish "Ark of the Covenant", means safety and power to the tribe holding it, while its loss spells disaster to the tribe and its subsequent dispersion. The Ruala have held it uninterruptedly for nearly a century and a half, but even to-day the sight of "Ishmael's camel-throne", with the chosen maiden sitting on it in times of war, will inspire them to greater heroism. The warriors composing its guard of honour are the picked troops of the tribe. They vouch for its safety with life and limb; they are, above all others, the heroes of Arabia.

Before coming into the keeping of the Ruala, the *Markab* was held by the Amarat. More precisely, it was in possession of the Ibn Hadhdhal family of that tribe until 1793. In that year the Wuld'Ali, a tribe in alliance with the Ruala, made war on the Amarat. Jidua ibn Mubadir, a Rueyli then visiting the Wuld'Ali, took part in the campaign. At the height of the decisive battle, so the tale is told, this Rueyli, with permission from the Wuld'Ali chieftain, flung himself on the horsemen guarding the *Markab* (with the Amarat maiden enthroned in it), cut his way through single-handed, and with one blow of the sword cut off one of the legs of the camel bear-

1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

776 ing the emblem of the tribe, and brought it to the
• 173 ground. With the sudden overthrow of the Holy Standard, the resistance of the Amarat also broke down and, terror-stricken, they suffered a crushing defeat.

On the battlefield the victors found Jidua, killed from ambush by a foot-soldier, and the Amarat maiden of the camel throne—Jamila—who had stabbed herself to death so as not to survive the shame of her people's defeat. The Wuld'Ali, indeed, claim to this day that Jidua had been Jamila's lover; for, they say, the lifeless bodies of those two were found side by side beneath the collapsed *Markab*, and one of Jamila's hands was still clenched round the hilt of her dagger while her other hand clasped the hand of Jidua.

After the defeat of the Amarat, the *sheykh* of the Wuld'Ali presented the *Markab* and with it Jidua's sword, now famous, to the Ruala, since it was a Rueyli who had overthrown the *Markab* and thus brought about the victory to the Wuld'Ali. Since then this sacred emblem has been in the hands of the Sha'lan family and has accompanied the Ruala in all their victorious wars, a symbol of their dominant position among all the Bedouin tribes of Arabia.

778 Of Jidua's sword—Thu'l-Hayyatu—"the-one-en-
773 dowed-with-life"—there is also an older legend, which
821 the aged Prince Nuri Sha'lan thus related to me:

In the fifth century of the Hegira (the twelfth by our reckoning) when the 'Anaza Bedouins were still grazing their camels south of Teyma at the Jabal Bird, it happened on the sacred pilgrim's road to Mecca from Damascus. Janda ibn Mubadir, an ancestor of Jidua, was

[For the history of tribal relations between the Rwala and other tribes, of various clans and chiefs from the beginning of the nineteenth century, see the narratives in category 116, pp. 574-661. For an account of traditions concerning the Rwala chiefs, see category 116, pp. 51-58.]

2:Musil S-4,5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

CHAPTER XI

CAMELS

According to a Rwala tradition the Bedouins originally had no camels and the Jews no horses. The Jews camped in the almost inaccessible mountain rifts of the al-Haṣb district in the Ḥeǧâz. No Bedouin would ever visit them, fearing to lose his way and fall into some of the rocky gorges there. But once the Bedouins made a raid on a tribe encamped alongside al-Haṣb. Their guide, a herdsman, claimed knowledge of every path in the whole district; yet even he lost his way among the rocks of the Ḥeǧâz. This impressed on the Bedouins the inhospitality of this territory, and they begged Allâh not to send even their worst enemies there for punishment when they died. The raiders crawled from one ravine into another but could not disentangle themselves from the wild rocks. They ate up everything they had taken with them for the raid, killed some horses, and cooked their flesh, but still could not find their way out to the plain. At last they met a traveler, whom they asked for the nearest camp, and were told that there were some Jews close by. Then the traveler conducted them by a narrow path across isolated crags divided by ravines, till they saw in a large gully shut in by hillsides the black tents of the Jews and before and among them curious animals, such as they had never seen before. The traveler told them they were camels, *bel*. The Bedouins concealed themselves on the heights and after sunrise, leading their horses by the reins, descended into the gully, where they prepared to attack the Jews. These fled in fear on sighting the strangers mounted on animals unknown to them, but their white she-camels escaped even before them. Every pure white she-camel, *waṣḥa*, in the camp broke the tent ropes barring its way and ran to the neighboring gullies, while the she-camels known as *serḥa*, which are also white but with some black or almost blue hairs, looked at the Bedouins and their horses inquisitively and were captured with ease. Then it was that the Bedouin leader exclaimed: "May Allâh not bless these! *lâ jobârek bîš*," and commanded his men

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

173 to kill every *zerḳa* calf found in the camp. Again led by the traveler, the Bedouins now surrounded the place to which the Jews had fled and robbed them of the she-camels still in their possession. Since that time the Jews have kept no camels, satisfying their needs with sheep and goats but still hoping that the she-camels will return to them. They never tire of making leather buckets for drawing water as well as leather troughs; they fill them with water every Friday and, rapping on them, expect the camels to appear, but in vain, *raǧw al-jehûd min al-bel.*

CAMELS OF DIFFERENT AGES AND KINDS

231 *Bel*", a feminine noun, means camels in general. This word is never used in speaking of particular animals. "*Al-bel wuḫidat*, the camels were captured," is a common saying. Camels belonging to a certain clan or kin are designated by the words *ṭarš* or *debeš*. For "your camels were captured" the expression is "*ṭarškom*" or "*debaškom wuḫid*," for "an attack was made on them," "*ṣîr 'alejh*." "*Debaškom wên waǧah*" means "whither are your camels gone?"

Ba'îr is the common name for a camel, regardless of sex. The sentence: "Your camel is lost, *lekom ba'îren ṣâdi*," implies that one animal was lost, without stating whether a he- or she-camel is meant. Up to ten heads the plural is *ba'irât* or *ba'rin*; a larger, unspecified number is *abâ'er.*

Ǧemal is the word for a camel between its sixth and twentieth year. A plural of this word is never formed. "How many grown camels (males) have you?" is expressed by the

* Of the names given by the Rwala to the various parts of a camel's body (Fig. 35) I noted down:

1. 'aje
2. 'arnûse
3. ḥaṭm
4. burṭum
5. ǧarm
incisors: ǧrûd; c. eye-teeth: nâbe
6. šizz
7. ḥanaš'a
8. labje
9. ḥeddâǧ
10. ḥeǧr, ḥasa'
11. ǧôn
12. fâ'de
13. hdûse
14. mesne
15. 'erba
16. dhaǧîrt ar-ṣuḳa
17. rdrub, ḥrîf
18. arnabe
19. ǧerwa, rds ar-rumûs
20. mesnâb
21. daffa'
22. ǧamb
23. ǧanb
24. ḥûwe
25. marḳeǧa
26. 'urḳûb
27. ǧabaǧ
28. ǧil
root of the tail: 'akrat aǧ-ǧil
29. krûb
30. ǧafas
31. 'arḳûb
32. aḳj
33. berǧûm
34. maǧraḳ ar-rumûs
35. ǧaḳr
36. ferwa
37. sirr
38. abje
39. zâr
40. ḥâ'
41. 'aṣâa
42. rukba
43. ǧrâ'
44. ḥaff
45. rugûǧ
46. mankar, manǧaḳ
47. ǧifker
posteriors: 'arâwa, ǧeja
sexual organ: ḥeǧǧ
testicles: ḥaṣâṣa
sexual organ of a she-camel: subbe
udder: dejd
teats: ǧâr.

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

CHAPTER XII

HORSES

The Bedouins assert that no horses were created by Allâh in Arabia. According to their tradition they brought their first horses from the land of the settlers whom they raided. In the inner desert the horses have no place and would perish, did not the Bedouins look after them better than they look after their own children. A runaway horse cannot live long in the desert, while a camel will persist even without a man. Horses are of no economic value but serve merely as weapons for the getting of booty and influence. For this reason they are called *al-murnijât*, the enriching. It is said that the mares' bellies contain treasures and their backs help to win power, *al-ḫejl buṭûnahen kanz wa-ẓhûrahen 'azz*; for they give their owner colts which can be turned into money at any time, and it is much easier to make or repel an attack on horseback than when mounted on camels. The more horses a tribe has, the more feared it is by its neighbors and the greater its power. But successes gained on horseback are not lasting. The defeated neighbors unite for revenge, and soon both the riders and horses are annihilated. Hence the saying: "The horse reins are snakes, and death dwells on their backs; *al-ḫejl erseânahen ḥajîja wa-ẓhûrahen manâja.*"

HORSES OF DIFFERENT KINDS

The Rwala classify horses[10] as common ones, *kdîš* (pl., *kudš*), and thoroughbreds, *aṣîl* (pl., *aṣâjel*). The common horses are not kept in the desert. Of the thoroughbreds they raise for the

[10] The different parts of the horse (Fig. 48) are called:

1. 'arnabe	12. ḫajrat al-'aja	24. subûb
2. minḫar	13. ijen	25. ṣahad
3. ḫarṭam	14. margûr al-ijen	26. jaf'ac
4. 'dirse	15. fâ'da	27. arṭâb
5. mdaḥdam	16. mat'dref	28. krâ'
6. ḫarak	17. rububa	29. dajd, udder: ḫâr, teats
7. warîd	18. ḫdrad	30. surra, sirr
8. ḫabbar: in the middle, al'ad	19. dâbbar	31. baṭn
9. ḫagga	20. gabr	32. ḫarak
10. mukbad al-'aja	21. mgarmaṣ	33. kâbda
11. 'aja	22. ḫaja'	34. kâ'
	23. 'dirat aj-jâl	35. mukjen